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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [PK](#) [CH](#) [SA](#)
SUBJECT: QINGHAI MUSLIMS, PART 2: FOREIGN LINKS GROW

REF: A. BEIJING 7329
[B](#). 06 BEIJING 9665
[C](#). 06 BEIJING 8788

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor Aubrey
Carlson. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

[1](#)1. (C) Ties between Muslims in northwest China's Qinghai Province and those in the Middle East are on the rise because of widespread satellite TV use and an increasingly mobile populace. Qinghai contacts told PolOff September 14-19 (ref A) that many Muslim communities are trying to embrace more "Middle Eastern" forms of Islam. Contacts say that Ikhwan, the most common school of Islam practiced in Qinghai, represents a return to a "purer" form of Islam than the previously more widespread Qadim school. Ikhwan adherents reportedly seek to remove Chinese cultural influences. Architectural trends in Xining's mosques also reflect the growing sense of affiliation with foreign Muslims. A young, well-connected and foreign-educated Hui Muslim boasted to PolOff that the Yudaqiao Mosque, currently undergoing a multi-million RMB renovation, seeks to emulate "Arabic" architecture. Even a recent addition to the Dongguan Mosque, the headquarters of Qinghai's government-affiliated Islamic organization, used Mecca's Masjid al-Hasam as a model. While access to the outside world is increasing, most local contacts denied the existence of significant financial links to foreign Islamic organizations. End Summary.

Study Abroad Boosts Contact with Foreign Muslims

[1](#)2. (C) Xining's Dongguan Great Mosque sponsors twelve students each year to pursue higher education in Arab countries, mainly in Egypt. Han Musa (strictly protect), a well-connected young Hui in Xining who studied Arabic for four years in Malaysia, said students from Qinghai also study abroad in Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Iran and Singapore. Dongguan Mosque has one teacher who studied in Iran and speaks Persian. Two women now running their own school in rural Haidong Prefecture told PolOffs they studied the Qu'ran in neighboring Gansu Province under teachers trained in Kuwait and Iran (ref B). Despite the continued cultivation of such relationships, citizens and imams at several mosques in Xining and Haidong Prefecture told PolOffs that all mosque funds come from domestic sources. However, Han Congdige, a

Qinghai Salar restaurateur currently working in Beijing, said students who return from abroad sometimes serve as channels for foreign funding. Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) scholar Yin Gang told PolOff in 2006 that Muslims abroad occasionally funnel financial aid to China's Muslim communities through unofficial channels (ref C).

Architecture Increasingly Emulates Middle East

13. (C) In Xining, where the population of Muslims has grown exponentially in the past several years according to one Hui Muslim contact, PolOff observed an addition to the Dongguan Great Mosque built in the 1990s to resemble Mecca's Masjid al-Hasam. Local, private donations are funding renovation of the nearby Yudaqiao Mosque. RMB 7 million (USD 930,000) of these funds were donated by the privately-owned Muslim Construction and Engineering Company Ltd. Han Musa, the Malaysian-educated nephew of the company's owner, pointed out that the new Yudaqiao mosque is supposed to "look like an Arab mosque." The lobby of the Muslim Mansion, a bustling hotel in downtown Xining run by Han Wenke (strictly protect), Han Musa's father and head of the Qinghai Hui and Salar Relief Association, features a 12- to 15-meter-long mural with historic landmarks of eastern China and the Middle East on opposite sides, joined by an expanse of desert. Han Musa remarked to PolOffs that the desert represents the path of Islam from West to East and the continued link between the two regions' Muslim communities. So far, the embrace of Middle Eastern building styles is restricted to major cities like Xining. The vast majority of mosques in the Qinghai countryside that PolOffs saw on this trip retain distinctly Chinese-style architecture.

Ikhwan Seeks Purify Islam of Chinese "Alterations"

14. (C) According to Gao Hongwei (strictly protect), a director of the Relief Association, Ikhwan, the most dominant Islamic movement in Qinghai since the early 20th century, represents a return to a "purer" type of Islam similar to "Middle Eastern Islam." This is opposed to the once-dominant Qadim school. Gao said Qadim practices had been altered through many years of contact with Chinese culture. While all contacts downplay differences between Ikhwan and Qadim, Gao's comments track with those of imams and scholars in nearby Shaanxi Province, who recently told PolOff that Ikhwan imams have sought to remove the Chinese "accent" and "dialect" common in Qadim prayers and services, and to read verses in "standard Arabic."

Satellite TV Invites Foreign Influence

15. (C) Satellite television is another important link to the Muslim world abroad. According to Gao, dish prices run from RMB 400-1300 (USD 55-175) in Xining. However, PolOff witnessed that satellite dishes are also very common in towns and villages throughout Haidong Prefecture. Han Musa said the more expensive dishes are able to pick up Arabic channels from Bahrain, India and Saudi Arabia, with the Saudi Arabian channel being the most popular. Although some locals who have studied the Qu'ran read and speak some Arabic, Han indicated that more people watch broadcasts simply for the images. One elderly resident of rural Hualong County, however, suggested to PolOff that the Government is cracking down on illegal dishes. Last year, the man said, officials conducted a house-by-house inspection in his village to check for illegal satellite hookups. Additionally, a public notice outside the mosque in another village in Hualong carried instructions on "mandatory

satellite adjustments" (presumably to stop reception of foreign channels).

Complaints about U.S. Foreign Policy

¶6. (C) During this visit to Qinghai, PolOff heard numerous criticisms from Muslim contacts of U.S. foreign policy. Gao, Han and Du all complained to PolOff about U.S. support for Israel and U.S. actions in Iraq and Afghanistan. However, Gao noted that "many people" also listen to Voice of America, which is well-liked for its "actual" news reporting.

Ties to Uighurs Exist, but Insignificant, Say Contacts

¶7. (C) Some Qinghai Muslims PolOff spoke with expressed sympathy for their fellow Muslims in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region, where the government keeps a tighter lid on religious activity. Contacts said Uighurs continue to travel to Qinghai to study the Qu'ran (ref B), though exact figures are difficult to find. In June 2007, PolOff encountered several Uighurs studying the Qu'ran at Xining's Fuqiangxiang Mosque. PolOffs' Hui Muslim driver, surnamed Yang, said that he knew Xinjiang's Uighurs "have some difficulties" with the Government. But while Yang "cares" about the Uighurs' plight, he added that there is nothing he can do to help.

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